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LETTER DATED 1 JULY 1992 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you a letter, dated 1 July 1992, from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, H.E. Dr. Haris Silajdzic (see annex).

May I ask for your kind assistance in having the letter distributed to the members of the Security Council, and having the letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Muhamed SACIRBEY
Ambassador and
Permanent Representative

Annex

Letter dated 1 July 1992 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed to the President of the Security Council

Since I last had the honour of addressing the Security Council in a letter dated 22 June 1992 (S/24137), the war of aggression against Bosnia and Herzegovina has escalated to unbelievable proportions.

Between then and now, the death toll has increased to more than 50,000 persons. Many have died in the most inhuman, horrible way. The number of homeless has increased to 1.5 million.

Since the aggression against my country began, the level of cultural genocide has reached an unprecedented level. Seventy-six Catholic cathedrals, 220 mosques, three Jewish synagogues and sites and 10 Orthodox churches have been destroyed.

Economic damage and destruction has risen to more than $100 billion.

The terrible war of aggression has shattered, traumatized and dehumanized not only Bosnia and Herzegovina, but all of Europe and much of the world.

The world now acknowledges who the evil force is in the Yugoslav crisis. The Belgrade regime and its proxies occupying our territory have become the "pariah of the world".

United States Secretary of State Baker, last week articulated the outrage of the civilized world. He called Serbian aggression "an absolute outrage ... barbarism at its worst extreme".

And now, from reports out of Lisbon, London, Paris, New York and Washington, preparations are being made to do something to prevent the triumph of the aggressor. There is a glimpse of hope now.

The United States is providing a badly needed diplomatic momentum. The United Nations Secretary-General has issued an ultimatum to the Serbian terrorists. On Saturday, 27 June 1992, the European Community approved use of military force. The Western European Union is prepared to move. The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers supported armed intervention.

The visit of French President Mitterrand to Sarajevo on Sunday, 28 June 1992, focused the attention of the world on the crisis there.

There is hope that the international community will take measures to stop this unprecedented, unbelievable assault on humanity.

The international focus has been on Sarajevo. However, it is imperative that this body understand that the worst atrocities are occurring in the cities and towns that border Serbia and in other regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

As incident after incident is reported to my Government, it is clear why the death toll has increased so dramatically in recent weeks. Documented now at 50,000 deaths, the total could far exceed that level.

More than 1.5 million people have been made homeless as a result of intimidation and out-right deportation, as the Belgrade regime pursues its policy of "ethnic cleansing".

The untold stories of the death and suffering must be understood fully by the United Nations and the international community. Tens of thousands of innocent civilians in our country have died from heavy artillery attacks, rocket barrages, torture, starvation and other atrocities.

We have prepared a documented yet partial summary of such atrocities in the outlying cities and towns of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also have a listing of the sacred sites that have been destroyed. Both are enclosed with this letter.

In every region of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the aggressor has unleashed an unprecedented campaign of brutality, terror, atrocities, intimidation, hatred and fear.

In these towns and cities hidden from international observers and journalists, the inhuman and systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing continues unabated. Not since the Second World War has the world witnessed such unbelievable atrocities.

These crimes, committed away from the lens of the television news camera or even the eyes of objective observers, match or surpass the savage aggression in Sarajevo.

The historic towns and cities, once the embodiment of peaceful coexistence and tolerance, have become medieval torture chambers operating under the cloak of obscurity.

Of the 50,000 persons murdered in this war, of the 1.5 million of our citizens expelled from their communities, and of the countless others tortured, most of these heinous crimes have been committed outside Sarajevo.

In the region around Banja Luka, near the border with Croatia, non-Serb citizens have been exposed to a continuous reign of terror. They have been threatened, abused and even murdered. Many have been forced to flee.

In Brcko, 150 kilometres north of Sarajevo, 150 young women, ages 13 to 19, were forcibly taken from their homes to an undisclosed location, perhaps across the Serbian border. Their horrible fate can only be imagined.

From Tuzla came reports last week of Serbian attacks on a bus carrying 56 non-Serb villagers being held hostage by Serb paramilitary forces. The men, between 17 and 63 years of age, were forced to lie face-down on the floor of the bus. Serbian gunmen got off the bus, walked 30 yards away, and opened fire on the vehicle with a bazooka and automatic weapons.

Witnesses and human rights groups have documented numerous accounts, including the rape and other abuses of women, cutting of captives' throats and in some cases those of small children, and the herding of as many as 46 people at a time into barns, houses and other buildings, which were then set afire.

In the village of Vranjak, last week Muslim Slav children were said to have been stabbed and nailed to trees.

Civilians from eight villages in the Zvornik area, 100 kilometres north of Sarajevo, were held in small rooms at the Karakaj technical school. At least 20 died of suffocation. The captives were repeatedly beaten. Those seriously wounded were taken away by truck to undisclosed destinations. Others were taken in groups from a room, and those remaining behind heard rifle fire, screams and cries.

In Bratunac, 25 miles south-east of Zvornik, 2,000 non-Serb citizens were taken to a children's playground where they were beaten and robbed by two paramilitary groups, including one led by the notorious international outlaw known as "Arkan". The men were separated from the women and children. The guerrillas then executed anyone who had worked for the municipality, police or schools.

During the last week, fighter aircraft of the former Yugoslav Air Force bombed civilian areas in Visko, Modrica and other cities. In Prijedor, 13 truckloads of dead bodies were removed by Serb extremists and taken to an undisclosed location.

As I write, the Bosanska Krajina region is experiencing a horrible genocide on non-Serbs. In the towns of Bosanski Novi and Prijedor, Muslims are forced to wear "white bands" on their forearms for identification purposes. White bed sheets must be displayed on the roofs of their homes for the same reason. This is reminiscent of Nazi Germany, where Jews were subjected to the same persecution.

These latest incidents provide a small glimpse into the Serbian campaign of cultural genocide, economic devastation and political totalitarianism.

While efforts are made to open the Sarajevo airport and open the flow of relief supplies, attention must also be focused on the rest of this miserable situation.

It would be a serious mistake for the United Nations and the international community to assume the problem is solved when the airport opens.

In reality, that is simply the first step.

The British political philosopher, Edmund Burke, more than 200 years ago, identified the situation we face today in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and indeed across former Yugoslavia. Burke said: "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

May I request that this letter and the enclosures be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Haris SILAJDZIC
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Enclosure

A Record of Brutal Aggression

A partial list of documented atrocities committed by Serb regular and paramilitary forces operating illegally in Bosnia and Herzegovina

April-June 1992

In Banja Luka, a city north of Sarajevo, 50,000 of the city's Muslim residents are facing mass deportation by Serb paramilitary terrorists. The Serb mayor of the city recently demanded a "population trade" of non-Serbs with the mayor of a mostly Muslim city. The blatant effort at "ethnic cleansing" is typical of Serb efforts across Bosnia and Herzegovina. (Muslim Association of Banja Luka, 23 June 1992)

In Bratunac, Serb extremists forced captives to watch as bodies of executed men burned and inhale the smoke. Two thousand Muslim Slavs from the region were collected and taken to an elementary school playground where they were beaten and robbed. Women and children were separated, and by 7 May the Serbians executed between 30 and 50 people. This includes a Muslim religious leader who, in front of hundreds of the captives was ordered to make the three finger sign that is an emblem of the Serbian Orthodox church and nationalist cause. When the man refused, they beat him again and stabbed him in the throat until he fainted. The Serbs then stabbed him two more times, at which time he died. (The New York Times, 21 June 1992)

Approximately 80 per cent of Bosnia and Herzegovina, those areas under armed control of the Yugoslavia army and Serbian extremists, is under a total blockade. Journalists are not allowed to enter such areas. Not even humanitarian organizations are allowed inside. (Save Humanity report, a non-governmental agency consisting of the Red Cross of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Centre of Anti-War Activities, the United Nations Association for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Esperanto and the Youth Council of Bosnia and Herzegovina, of 3 June 1992)

Large contingents of humanitarian aid were taken by the Yugoslav army and Serb extremists when the aid passed through the regions they control. This was a common occurrence despite Serbian assurances otherwise. On 18 May, a Red Cross convoy carrying hospital supplies with permission to cross Serbian-occupied territory was attacked and destroyed, Red Cross personnel were killed and a United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) car was also destroyed. Extremists would not allow first aid to be administered or medicine to be delivered to even those most vulnerable in areas that are under blockade. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

Twenty sisters of the Adorers of the Blood of Christ were assaulted and mistreated during an attack on the convent at Banja Luka during the week of 15 June. (Mission of the Holy See, 23 June 1992)

In the central Bosnian region of Ilijas, the Serbian aggressors boasted of "having cleansed everything", a reference to the massive ethnic cleansing effort which has forced migration of both the Moslem population and so-called "Muslim cohorts" (Bosnian Serbs unsympathetic to the insurgents). (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 23 June 1992)

It is not uncommon for Serb extremists to abuse the humanitarian symbols of the Red Cross by stealing and then transporting armed soldiers in cars marked with the neutral logo. Thirty ambulances were stolen for this purpose in Sarajevo alone. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

The number of attacks on hospitals in the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina are immeasurable. The Sarajevo Hospital for Gynaecology and Obstetrics was attacked with heavy artillery from the territory controlled by Serb extremists. Three babies were killed. The Red Cross building was completely destroyed and the Children's Embassy, a humanitarian organization which was evacuating children from Sarajevo, was shelled by the Serb extremists when it was full of children. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992).

Serbs shot at a hospital bus at Sarajevo, killed a doctor and wounded three nurses, and fired on the border town of Jelas, killing two children. (Reuters, 25 June 1992)

In Nahorevo, Serbian extremists agreed to release non-serb women under the age of 18 years and all residents over 60 years and children provided the Bosnian Government was able to match the captives "age for age, women for women, old man for old man ... We want only Serbs". (The New York Times, 21 June 1992)

In a Serbian concentration camp in the village of Karakaj, near the town of Zvornik, 20 people died of suffocation. Inmates are repeatedly beaten and seriously wounded and taken away by truck to unknown destinations. Groups are taken into a room, lined up and shot. (The New York Times, 21 June 1992)

Ethnic cleansing and combat activities have become prevalent in the Brcko region where Serbian extremists have established their Court Martial in the "April 7th" stadium. (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 23 June 1992)

Ten miles north of Sarajevo, a bus carrying 56 Muslim Slav hostages was stopped. Their Serb captors got off the bus, walked 30 yards away and opened fire on the vehicle with a bazooka and automatic weapons. The attackers then tossed hand grenades among the survivors. Of the 56 hostages, 47 were killed. (The New York Times, 21 June 1992)

No journalistic crew is allowed into the Serb-occupied territories, and radio and television facilities in those areas have been redirected to TV Serbia, which is strongly censured by the Belgrade regime. The international press centre at Sarajevo has been shelled and destroyed. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

In Vranjak, Muslim Slav children were stabbed and nailed to trees. Reports throughout Eastern Bosnia of rape and abuse of women, cutting the captives' throats, herding as many as 46 people at a time into barns, houses and other buildings and setting fire to them. Muslim Slav men have been tied to wooden crosses before being killed. (The New York Times, 21 June 1992)

In the town of Brcko, approximately 150 kilometres north of Sarajevo, 150 young girls, aged 13 to 19 years, were kidnapped by Serbian forces and taken to undisclosed locations, perhaps across the nearby Serbian border. The incident is the latest in a series of kidnapping of women who were taken to Serbia, raped and returned to Bosnia. Many became pregnant as a result of the assaults. (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 28 June 1992)

Also in the Brcko region, Serbian terrorist commanders ordered and supervised the slaughter and execution of children previously gathered in Brcko prisons. (Commission for War Crimes in Brcko, 18 June 1992)

Serbian insurgents torched the city of Foca on 6 April 1992, destroying all Muslim houses and initiating a slaughtering of Muslim women and children. Muslim boys and men were tied with wire and taken to an unknown destination. (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 May 1992)

After setting fire to the heart of Foca, Serbian "Chetnik" insurgents proceeded ruthlessly to loot Muslim apartments and houses. During this chaos a group of nine Chetnik officers raped a Muslim woman in her own office in front of her children. After the rape the Chetnik's commanding officer inquired "How was the filthy Muslim bitch? Did you tear her into pieces?" (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 May 1992)

During May, in Ilidza, a town occupied by Serb troops, a convoy of 5,000 mothers and children refugees travelling to safety were held hostage and abused for two days, despite permission obtained from Serb forces for their route. They were kept for exchange of impriosned members of the Yugo army. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

During April, in Ilidza, an UNPROFOR peace convoy was arrested by Serb troops. The soldiers were kept, disarmed and maltreated. In Vogosca, Serb troops stole the cars to use them for fighting, and on 2 June, in Dobrinja, an UNPROFOR convoy attempting to offer relief to children was attacked by Serb extremists. One person was killed and several more injured. Because of constant attacks on UNPROFOR, most of the mission was pulled out of Sarajevo. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

That same evening, in Foca, large-scale arrests began along with slaughters of Muslim citizens in their own backyards and the mass imprisonment of Muslim Foca residents. (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 May 1992)

On 4 April 1992, in the village of Tabacki, Chetnik soldiers ordered a Muslim farmer to slaughter his 30 sheep and 10 lambs in order to prepare them a meal. This act did not satisfy the Chetniks, so they demanded that the host

hand over all of his money and jewellery. When the farmer refused, he was promptly decapitated. The Chetniks then began to play a maniacal "game" of soccer with the farmer's head, kicking it back and forth to one another in the dead man's dining room. (Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 May 1992)

The towns of Gorazde and Tuzla are overfilled with many of Bosnia and Herzegovina's 1.5 million refugees. Despite this fact, the Yugo army and Serb extremists are fiercely shelling these towns. The United Nations special envoy asserts that the expulsion of the non-Serb population and refugees are not the consequence but the final aim of Serbia. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

Statements from witnesses and journalists confirm the existence of concentration camps for non-Serbs throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the State prison at Foca, and others in the town of Visegrad, Bratunac, Brcko, and Bijeljina. Treatment of the inmates of these camps includes torture, beatings and other physical maltreatment. Executions are common. Estimates indicate that at least 100,000 civilians are interned in such camps. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

Mass executions and common graves are becoming commonplace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Clear evidence of such graves can be found in the Serbian border towns of Mali Zvornik and Amajici. Foreign journalists have witnessed massacres in these regions where whole non-Serb villages were burned and their populations, including women and children, killed. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

Some of the 35,000 residents in the Sarajevo suburb of Dobrinja are eating grass to survive the 2 and 1/2 month blockade by Serb gunners who surround the town. (Associated Press, 19 June 1992)

On 10 June 1992, Serbian Chetnik forces delivered "impetuous artillery attacks on the city of Tuzla". The severe destruction of the city included the damage of Tuzla's main hospital and its clinic for contagious diseases. (Tuzla Commune Crisis Headquarters, 10 June 1992)

At the end of April, near Mostar, a member of the European Community Monitor mission was killed by the Yugoslav army. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)

On 28 May, the building in Sarajevo where humanitarian activities were coordinated (Peace Centre, United Nations Association, Centre for Anti-War Activities) was destroyed by Serb extremists, disabling the work of those organizations. (Save Humanity report, 3 June 1992)